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HIS VIEWS ON PAPA ITA'S PERFORMANCES.

The Tahitian "An Able Missionary of the old Native Polytheism"—"Powerful Re-enforcement."

Dr. Bishop in "The Friend" devotes considerable space to Papa Ita and the recrudescence of ancient Polynesian superstitions. Of Papa Ita's performance he says:

"A Polynesian kahuna or sorcerer from one of the Southern Islands, has just been giving in this city, exhibition of his power to walk upon red-hot stones, before crowds of spectators. The verified facts are as follows: A trench of six feet wide sixteen feet long and four feet deep was filled with dry cordwood over which rocks were piled to several feet in depth. The wood was lighted and burned for several hours, bringing the stones to a considerable heat. All being in readiness and an audience assembled within a curtained enclosure, paying one dollar apiece, Papa Ita proceeded to walk barefooted over the heated stones. First the stones were punched and levelled by long poles which took fire in the process. Papa Ita then went around the trench, muttering incantations to his gods, and thrashing the stones with a bunch of ti-leaves after which he walked twice or thrice the length of the heated stones with bare feet.

"At the close of the second performance, a soldier named Murray followed the kahuna over the stones, having only stockings over his feet, repeating the action. It would appear that the stones were far from being red-hot.

"The city papers denounce the performance as a 'fake' and a fraud. That this is the truth respecting it, would seem to be confirmed by the fact that Papa Ita's white managers resented Murray's efforts to prove the fraud, treated him with great violence. Fifty hundred dollars of tickets are said to have been sold for the first performance.

"This fire-walking is circumstantially described as a well-known performance in the South Pacific Islands, and in several Asiatic countries, including Japan. It is always accompanied by idolatrous incantations. We have deemed it quite possible that the kahuna, or Tohunga, was able with his real supernatural aid, but by the quasi-hypnotic effect of his incantations, to generate in himself some kind of a trance condition, allied perhaps to hypnosis. He might thereby avail himself of some occult natural law, not understood by our present science, which would enable him to repel and withstand the effects of heat. We present this as a mere conjecture, in the interest of denying any fancied supernatural intervention on the part of the kahuna in whose existence and power even the Christianized Polynesians more or less believe.

"The performances of Papa Ita, as described by the reporters, would seem to belong to a lower and vulgar class of mere deception. The venerable Tohunga, however, received the veneration of many enthusiastic Hawaiians, who believed him to possess 'the great power of the gods' (Aha S. 19). He is evidently a very able missionary of the old native Polytheism. Perhaps he is not much more so than some of these old Hawaiian kahunas, of whom the majority of the natives still stand more or less in awe. Papa Ita is a powerful reinforcement to their destructive influence, which is a leading factor in the wasting away of the native race.

Discussing the subject on its psychological side, Dr. Bishop says:

"We were formerly acquainted with an Englishman of considerable mental force who had made his home for thirty years in a remote district of Maui, and had raised a Hawaiian family. He was known to be a thorough believer in the supernatural powers claimed by the kahunas otherwise medicine men or wizards. There is ample evidence that the kahunas themselves believe in their own magic powers, although they do not scruple to reinforce those powers with fraud to any extent. It seems probable that in common with persons of their craft in all heathen countries, they have learned to employ physical and mental laws of an occult sort, and are thus enabled readily to produce sickness and death, as well as to counteract the same.

"These practices of sorcery are intimately connected with the worship of the heathen deities, both the greater and the lesser gods. They are thus powerful allies of heathen idolatry. Like all priest-craft they are also allied to political tyranny, and are destructive to political liberty. Whoever opposes the despot stands in fear of the lesser gods. The kahuna undertakes to propagate this unholy terror in order to establish his own corrupt despotic power. For this purpose he organized sorcery in his 'Hale Naha' society, and made himself the chief sorcerer, and caused himself to be habitually worshipped as a god.

"A late eminent Hawaiian is believed to have gone to his death in consequence of kahuna machinations. It was probably true. He was an earnest and active Christian, but that had not sufficiently emancipated this good man from inherited and deep rooted prejudices to superstition, to enable him to withstand the insistent warnings and admonitions of his friends and associates added to those of the sorcerers. The latter have been a prominent and honored Hawaiian pastor to yield to the importunity of his family and employ a sorcerer in a futile effort to save the life of a sick relative. Next to social immorality, sorcery is doubtless a chief cause of the wasting away of this amiable Hawaiian race, both by direct and indirect influence. It is diametrically opposed to all rational care of health and to sanitation."

JUST SO.

Little Elmer—Papa, what happens if you convince a man against his will? Professor Broadhead—Oh, you have to let it all over again the next time you catch him.—Puck.

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